



## President's Comment

**David M. Palafox, M.D.**

*President*

*El Paso County Medical Society*



**“MEDICAL HOMES LOWER HEALTH CARE COSTS. Cost-effective health care hinges on to on patients having access to a continuous relationship with a primary care physician (PCP) or MEDICAL HOME. Finding a medical home has become increasingly difficult for our Texas Medicaid patients. Over the past six years, physician participation in Texas Medicaid has declined from 67% to 38 %. This obviously threatens patient’s ability to obtain medically necessary services and forces them to rely on expensive emergency rooms to meet basic health care needs.”**

This is the message from our Texas Medical Association. If you did not know, the biggest payer of healthcare dollars in Texas is Medicaid, then Medicare and thirdly are private healthcare plans. For patients in El Paso (and Elsewhere) there needs to be ACCESS to healthcare and a MEDICAL HOME. We need more El Paso doctors as there is a 50% shortage in our CITY for a population our size. That is why we need the FOUR YEAR MEDICAL SCHOOL in El Paso so we can grow our own. Studies have shown that where you train and do your residency there is a 70% chance you stay and practice. This way we can keep them, too. It is called ACCESS for all.

For too long we Medical Doctors have been silent and just taking care of patients, this is now not enough. IF YOU ARE IN THE PRACTICE OF MEDICINE THEN YOU ARE INVOLVED IN THE PRACTICE OF POLITICS, BECAUSE YOUR FUTURE LIVELIHOOD DEPENDS ON BOTH! Let our local and state leaders know that we cannot afford to continue to “practice medicine as usual” as our current climate exists; we physicians are over-regulated, over-litigated and under-funded. Do not fall for the line that Doctors are expensive or that we are responsible for high health cost as > 90 percent of the insurance dollar goes toward hospital care costs. There is political power with increasing numbers of voices from our medical community. For you to be heard, we need for you to be active at the El Paso County Medical Society level and if you are willing at the TMA or even AMA national level.

I am at your service.

“America the Litigious and L.L.S.D” ...Recent headline story in the El Paso Times where a local lawyer engaged in a lawsuit “suffered intense embarrassment, extreme anger, sleepless nights, prolonged anxiety, difficulty eating, bouts of nausea, emotional reactions and outburst at the slightest provocation, nightmares and extreme stress”. The irony of this situation is that anybody involved with Lawsuit Inc. in the United States has endured very similar if not more symptoms. Only in criminal cases is the rule of **Justice delayed is justice denied** applied to resolve the situation in a timely manner. In civil cases, it takes many years and a good deal of expense to obtain closure. Ask the poor couple who owned the cleaners store in D.C. and were terrorized for 58 million dollars over a pair of pants gone missing.

The hidden cost, not only in money, but legal stress affects us all. It is estimated in the price tag for Malpractice litigation alone is 250 BILLION Dollars a year! Not to mention the unknown charge of defensive medical care. Yet we physicians’ are expected to control costs, provide timely & efficient care with 100% positive outcomes for all, prescribe drugs with no side effects and then mangle with unhappy patients who seek legal recourse to correct alleged wrongs for millions of dollars. However, wait, only 10% of doctors loose their malpractice lawsuit and so the other 90% should be in high spirits over their triumph until they are dropped by their insurance carrier or suffer another increase in their already hefty insurance premium.

The malady of **Legal Lotto Stress Disorder** (I made this up and therefore want credit if any) with symptoms described previously will require much further study and research for at this time there is no successful therapy to control this disorder. **L.L.S.D.** will not go away until America realizes that we cannot afford the present legal-medical model of healthcare. If life were fair; then our brain cells would last forever and not our fat cells.

David M. Palafox M.D.

---

David M. Palafox, M.D.  
President  
El Paso County Medical Society